

The rejection of Claim 25 as being anticipated by Stevens is not well taken. Claim 25 describes an instrument having a blade at the distal end of shaft for cutting tissue, and a guide member extending from the distal end beyond the shaft in which such blade is disposed for traveling along the guide member out from the shaft to cut tissue located outside of the instrument. Clearly as shown in FIG. 2 above, Stevens tip (14) cannot be the claimed guide member since there is no blade disposed for traveling along such tip (14), and any cutting by the Stevens cutting member (52) must occur within the instrument's tube (72) when cutting member (52) extends through cavity (50). Thus, Stevens lacks the claimed guide member and further lacks the claimed blade that travels out from the shaft to cut tissue located outside of the instrument. Thus, Applicant requests that the rejection of Claim 25 and its dependent Claim 26 be withdrawn.

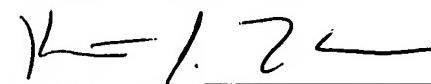
Claims 5 and 7 were rejected as being unpatentable over Stevens in view of Sauer et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,562,694 ("Sauer"). Claims 5 and 7 depend on Claim 1, and as Sauer fails to describe or suggest that argued above as being absent in Stevens, Claims 5 and 7 cannot be obvious in view of the combination of Stevens and Sauer.

Allowance of Claims 8-9 and 20-24 is gratefully acknowledged.

It is believed the application is in condition for allowance, and a notice of allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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